

Pen y Groes, Llanwnda.

The Old Cottages of Snowdonia :

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Churches of Arllechwedd

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Contents

	PAGE
The Country: The position of the Cottages and their harmony with the surroundings, considered from an artistic and historical point of view, ...	1
The Cyttiau Gwyddelod, or round huts, ...	3
The rectangular building: A hall of the twelfth century, the later cottage in embryo. Wattle huts at the end of the twelfth century, ...	4
The fourteenth century and the earliest extant roofs: Dôl y Waenydd, Bettws y Coed. Tyddyn Cynal, near Aber Conwy. Ty'n y Wern, Dwygyfylchi. Bryn Tudur, Henryd. Old Plas, Llanfair Fechan. Merchlyn Bach, Ro Wen. Tai Fry, Cerrig y Drudion. Bodsilin, Aber Gwynnegrin. Cae Iol, Llangelynin, .	5
The Earliest extant Walling and Ingle. Ffynnon Bedr, Llanbedr, ...	12
The wooden Lattice. English work—Aber Conwy, .	15
The late fifteenth or early sixteenth century: Roofs, partitions and wattlework. The first appearance of a separate sleeping apartment. Cymryd, near Aber Conwy. Beudy 'r Efail, Beddgelert. Ty'n Twr, Glan Ogwen. Buarthau, Dolwyddelan. Iscoed Isaf, Nantlle. English work—Cochwillan. Anglicized—Roofs at Gwydir and Plas Mawr, Aber Conwy, . . .	16
The seventeenth century: Cae Lloi, Beddgelert, and Derwen Deg, Glyn. Dinas Moch, Beddgelert, .	24

Old Cottages of Snowdonia

PAGE

Walling: Slate-slab and granite boulder. Battered work, angle boulders, and plinth. Cottage at Llandwrog. Carrog, Cwm Penmachno. Pegged work. Pen y Groes, Llanwnda. Old Plas, Llanfair Fechan. Use of river stones—Bont Newydd, near Caernarfon. Benarth Farm, near Aber Conwy. Coursed work—Bryn Eithin, near Clynnog. Bont Newydd. Cochwillan, Llanllechid. Derwen Deg, continued, . . .	27
Chimneys: Old Plas, Llanfair Fechan. Merchlyn Bach, Ro Wen. Ty'n Twr, Glan Ogwen. Elernion, Trevor. Anglicized work—Plas yn Bont, Bont Newydd. Bwlch y Maen and Dugood, Penmachno, . . .	37
Introduction of loft and stone staircase: Henryd, near Aber Conwy. Bwlch Gydrhos, Llangelynin. Hafod Lwyfog, Nant Gwynant, . . .	38
Partitions: Post-and-panel. In-and-out boarding. Cymryd. Tyddyn Pwll, Ty'n y Groes. Pen y Bryn, Aber Gwynnregin, . . .	42
Roof coverings: Reed thatching. Stone slates. Cerrig Mwsog. Ton slates. Fixed sizes, . . .	45
Introduction of dormers and chambers on loft floor, followed later by wooden staircases. The gabled dormer, the sloping dormer, the hipped dormer. Tu hwnt i'r Bont, Llanrwst. Ty Du, Llanberis. Tyddyn Pwll. Plas y Person, Clynnog. House on Twthill, Caernarfon. Ysgubor Fawr, Dolbenmaen. Bryn Eithin, near Clynnog, . . .	48
The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century: Plas Dolbenmaen. Bryn Goleu, Llanfair Fechan, .	59
Glass and Windows: The diamond and oblong leaded light. The casement, the sliding and the sash window, . . .	60

Contents

	PAGE
Ridges: Clay, lime, stone and tile ridges. Coloured ridges. Buckley and other local brick. Tan Lôn, Maes y Groes, ...	61
The Interior: The hearth and ingle. The baking pit. A wattle ingle. Ty'n Cae, Bettws y Coed. The earth floor. The kitchen. The furniture. The daily life, ...	63
The Cottages practically considered in their artistic Aspect: The local stone. Whitewash. Rendering and rough-cast. Dry walling. The trees of the country. The roof. Broken colour. Simplicity, .	68

THE writers desire to take this early opportunity to record their indebtedness to Mr. W. Prichard Williams, of Cae'r Onnen, Bangor, for his invaluable assistance in revising the proofs.



Back of Cottage, Clynnog.

Built into the country, so as to be turned
away from the S.W. gales.



The Old Cottages of Snowdonia

'Our teachers must be Nature and History.'—*William Morris.*

Snowdonia—or as it is called in Welsh **Eryri**, the eagles' eyrie—includes, within but a small area, some of the most magnificent and varied scenery in the British Isles. Peak and precipice, lake and torrent, glen and waterfall, vale and forest, all combine to add their majesty and their charm; and apart from these, there is no place in the district which has not its own characteristic beauty, a beauty fully satisfying, because perfect in its own degree.

Now it has been wisely ordained that the loftier and grander parts of our mountain scenery should not as a rule be habitable, otherwise the awe these majestic masterpieces of nature rightly demand might be diminished. It is well that these great mountain peaks should remain apart, far from all human habitation, to give us an opportunity amid the vast and solitary surroundings of being impressed to the full with their wild grandeur.

Along the seacoast and in the valleys, however, the case is different. There the mountains form

indeed an impressive, but not an awe-inspiring background, and we live as it were at a level not too exalted to be associated with cheerfulness of mind and domestic happiness. It is there that we find the little farmsteads, each with its old cottage in the centre of a few small fields carefully walled in; and we cannot but feel that even if these humble dwellings were more numerous than they are, their white walls and lowly purple roofs could but give that animated touch and suggestion of human interest that would be lacking in a scene otherwise perfect. They do not detract but rather add to the beauty of the picture of which they form so integral a part.

The old buildings, however, may be studied not only from an **artistic** but also from an **historical** point of view; for just as the many-branched Welsh oaks are peculiar to the Principality, so are these buildings the natural product of the country, the true growth as it were of the soil, and show as clearly as any written history the development of the life of the people. Not only is it essential, if we would preserve the marvellous beauty of our country—the greatest treasure we possess—that we should understand these traditional methods of building, so completely in harmony with it, but also, if we would understand rightly the past, there is no better book for us to study than the old homes of our ancestors.

The Cyttiau Gwyddelod

Sad to relate, most of these ancient structures are in the last stages of decay, and therefore in a few years' time these valuable pages of national history and native building will be lost for ever. It is earnestly to be hoped that greater interest may be taken in them before it is too late.

Having now sketched out the main lines of our inquiry, we will begin by taking a brief survey of the development of the homestead in this district from the earliest times.

The **Cyttiau Gwyddelod**, or circular huts, of which there are so many remains in this district, lasted certainly through the Romano-British period, if not later. Probably in the remote past their construction was merely that of a wigwam of boughs arranged in a circle and meeting together at the top, in form like a tent, such as might grace a gipsy encampment at the present day. In later times the roof, formed with poles or branches of trees laced together with wattle and covered with reeds or turf, was raised on a circular, oval, or irregular-shaped wall of wood, wattle, or stone, 4 to 6 feet high. In this district stone was plentiful, and the huts which were built of it vary from about 4 to 8 yards in diameter. In some remains, a centre stone is found on which a centre post is supposed to have stood, and this is known to have been the case in the

The Rectangular Building

Glastonbury lake-village where stumps of central oak posts are found in position.

The hearth in the case of the stone-built huts was often against the outer wall, and the smoke probably escaped through the doorway.

Huts of this character are described by Strabo as being used by the Gauls. Others not very dissimilar are pictured on the Antonine column, having upright wooden walls resting on the ground surmounted by thatched domes. Each of these has, however, in addition a lean-to annexe.

When the circular dwelling, after having been used from prehistoric times, at last gave way to **the rectangular**, there seems to have been little improvement in comfort except probably as regards space. We gather from the accounts of Giraldus, and from the *Dream of Rhonabwy*—the latter of especial interest, as the hall described must have been situated near our district—that in the late twelfth century the fire was made against one side of the hall, there being as yet no ingle or chimney, and that at night-time the bed of rushes, straw, or bracken, covered with coarse cloth, was laid along the opposite side. This probably means that the fire was made against one gable-end, and the sleeping accommodation lay along the other; in fact, the normal arrangement of the **later cottage in embryo**, so that on entering the dwelling by a door in the side wall, the fire

A Hall of the Twelfth Century

would be on one side, and the bed on the other, as Giraldus describes. This arrangement is still the usual one in the cottages on the west coast of Ireland.

There appears, however, to have been no subdivision of any kind, though we find elaborate accounts of chambers in the *Mabinogion*, but these are said to be due to Norman influence, and are far too gorgeous in detail to be associated with local work. There were probably no windows, other than, maybe, little slits—windeyes or windholes—such as we see in barns nowadays, and which are found sometimes in the back walls of the chamber as late as the seventeenth or eighteenth century. (See plan of Derwen Deg.)

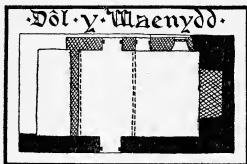
Giraldus mentions that they had **wattled butts** in the woodlands built to last a year. It is probable that these were circular on plan, and that the rectangular dwelling had not in his day entirely superseded the circular.

We must now pass over another century, or a century and a half, before we reach the **earliest actual examples of work** of the cottage-type that have survived. These may be ascribed to the fourteenth or early fifteenth century.

The characteristic of these cottages seems to have been that the roof principals were composed each of two great curved pieces of oak, starting from the

The Fourteenth Century

floor, against the side walls, and meeting at the ridge. This was doubtless a survival of wattle or wood building, where it was obviously necessary for the principals to carry the thrust to the ground. It is possible that the early churches were roofed in some such manner, as they were from the beginning rectangular, but it is a curious fact that there is no existing church roof in this district with principals

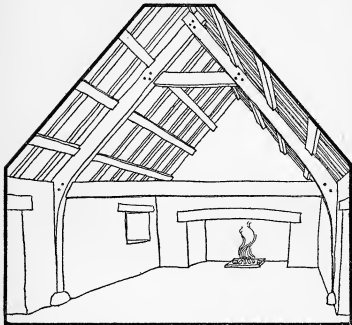


All plans are shown to a uniform scale of 16 feet to an inch.
Modern work or additions are shown hatched.

starting from the floor like those of these old cottages, though they were erected about the same time, or, if anything, earlier. The reason appears to be that the churches were more under the influence of the Latin monks, who were introduced by Llywelyn the Great into this district in the late twelfth century, and so we find in them close-couple roofs, as at Llanrhychwyn, Llanbedr, Caerhŷn, and Gyffin, more

The earliest extant Roofs

English in character, and in accordance with the style the monks themselves employed. We see therefore in these earliest cottages an influence more



Dŏl y Wlaenydd, Bettws y Coed.

All interiors, unless otherwise stated, are shown to scale, the roof principal nearest to the spectator being drawn to $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch to a foot.

completely native in character than in the churches of the same date.

Of this type of roof, which is now becoming very scarce, we will take three examples still standing.

The finest example is at ĐĐl y Wlaenydd at Bettws y Coed, near the Miners' bridge. One end of the old house has fallen down and the other end has been converted into cow-houses; the two principals, however, remain, the feet coming to the ground, where they stand on stone bases. The great curved rafters are each connected by two horizontal ties, this being apparently the usual method. The roof is covered with fine thick stone slates.

Our next example is at Tyddyn Cynal, near Conwy, which, owing to the kindness of Mr.



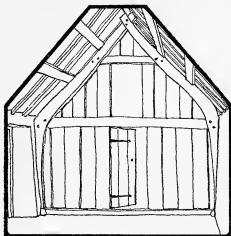
Clarence Whaite, we were able to examine. This cottage is much smaller than the last, the roof being only 11 feet in span and ruder in execution, but in other respects exactly similar in its

main lines. It is still covered with thatch.

Our last example is a very ruinous one at Ty'n y Wern, Dwygyfylchi, only the two great curved rafters of the principal remaining; the sinkings for the ties are, however, in the normal position. This cottage is peculiar in having only one principal, and originally consisted of only one apartment, a

Bryn Tudur

chamber having been added behind the ingle nook at a later date. The feet of the principals here are built into the wall, so that they are not visible to the bottom, but none the less reach through the wall to within a few inches of the floor-level. A portion of



Tyddyn Cynal, near Aber Conwy.

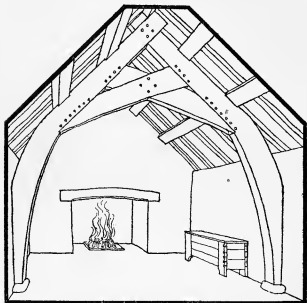
Showing partition between Chamber and Loft and
Kitchen framed into principal.

a similar principal is to be seen at **Bryn Tudur, Henryd**, one side of which has been destroyed by fire and repaired at a later date. This house has also had a later chamber added behind the ingle.

Though this system, of providing the principals with two horizontal ties, seems to have been the

Old Plas, Llanfair Ffechan

usual form, still others were used. There was at the **Old Plas, Llanfair Ffechan**, which was pulled down about forty years ago, a roof framed with cross ties. Portions of this old roof still remain as well as



Old Plas, Llanfair Ffechan.

An early form of chest is shown against the wall.

the old lines of the gable, so that it has been possible to reconstruct, with almost certain exactitude, the form of one of the old principals. We seem to see here in these cross ties a little of the same influence

Aberclyn Bach, Ro Wlen

that we find in the churches. The hall was a very fine one for the period, being about 17 feet wide, and the great timbers were magnificent pieces of native oak, 19 feet long, and at the broadest part, 1 foot 5 inches wide by 7 inches thick, tapering up to 1 foot 1 inch wide by 4½ inches thick at the ridge. There must have been some fine trees in the district in those days. The curved beam over the ingle, measuring 10 feet 6 inches long by 1 foot square, also remains, and was as shown in the illustration.

Two other curious examples may also be mentioned which have recently been taken down. One was at **Aberclyn Bach**, near **Ro Wlen**, which, instead of having cross ties, as at the Old Plas, had one big curved tie similar in form but of much larger proportions than that of the front of the porch of Gyffin church.



Aberclyn Bach, Ro Wlen.

The other was at **Tai Fry**, near **Bafod y Maidd, Cerrig y Drudion**, just outside our district, which had two vertical posts springing off the horizontal tie.

Bodsilín, at **Aber**, had a roof with great curved principals coming to the floor, but no one remembers exactly what the ties were like. **Cae 3ol**, near old

The earliest extant Walling

Llangelynin church, has the remains of such a roof, but the feet of the principals have been cut off.

There is no reason to suppose that these examples are any of them very ancient, though the finer ones may have dated back to the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries; but they are survivals, there can be little doubt, of the earliest type of roofing a rectangular building in this district, and have their origin in the wattle building.

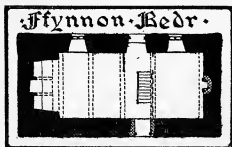
It is said that the nave of old Llanfair Fechan church was roofed in this manner, and there is good ground for thinking that the old churches were roofed in this way previous to the introduction of the close-couple roofs by the Latin monks.

The only cottage now in existence which we are assured belongs to a period probably as early as the fourteenth century is **Ffynnon Bedr**, near **Llanbedr y Cennin**, which by the courtesy of the Misses Brazil we were able to examine. It was in the possession of Maenan Abbey, together with the Sacred Well from which it takes its name.

This cottage was re-roofed probably in the eighteenth century, to make three chambers upstairs—nearly all the older houses having been thus treated—but the plan and the lower part of the walls have every appearance of belonging to a much earlier period. It will be noticed how very thick the walls are compared with the later examples, for they average

Ffynnon Bedr

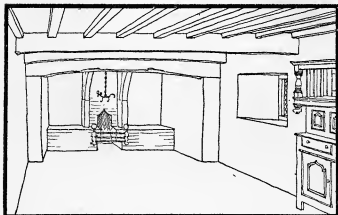
3 feet 6 inches. They are, as usual, built with earth on the inside and outside, but the centre of the walls, which is usually left dry, is in this instance filled with bran, doubtless with the idea of keeping damp from the house. The local mason at the present day, though using lime mortar, will usually leave the centre of the wall dry, unless otherwise directed, probably with the same traditional idea.



The general shape of the angle and the great curved beam over it are doubtless original, but the present fire arrangements are probably of late eighteenth or early nineteenth century workmanship. In the old days the fire was, it is almost certain, on the floor, with no iron bars or hobs of any sort, as shown in the sketch of Plas Llanfair Fechan.

The cottage was originally open to the roof, which apparently started from about 7 to 8 feet above the external ground-level, but it is impossible to state whether there was a chamber, though the usual

The earliest extant Ingle position is now occupied by one of later date. If, however, we are correct in our supposition that this farmstead dates from the fourteenth or early fifteenth century, it shows at any rate that one improvement had been made over the late twelfth-century cottage, namely the ingle fire with a chimney.



Ffynnon Bedr, Llanbedr y Cennin.

On the right is shown a Tridarn containing at the bottom stage two cupboards with ogree-headed panels (the earlier form) and two drawers, on the middle stage three small doors with round-headed panels (the later form), the top stage open.

Beautiful fireplaces and chimneys had been built at Caernarfon and Aber Conwy castles in the late thirteenth century, and it may be that the local builders had derived the idea of a chimney from these.

The Wooden Lattice

It is probable that the lattice window came in about this period. It can still be seen in many of the old outhouses, and certainly did not entirely go out of use in the cottages till the end of the seventeenth century. It consists of a frame of one, or more usually, two lights—very rarely of three, in which case there is a touch of English influence—with fixed diamond wooden lattice filling and solid wooden shutters behind, opening inwards. The diamond form keeps out the rain better than the square form, which we very occasionally find in some eighteenth-century examples, as at Bryn Goleu, Llanfair Fechan. We read of glass lattices in 'Geraint, the Son of Erbin,' in the *Mabinogion*, in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, but these, like the chambers referred to by the ancient writers, are due to Norman influence.



A Wooden Lattice
from Inside.

Before leaving this period we should notice the very fine example of **English work** in the old Aber Conwy Hotel at the corner of High Street and Castle Street, Aber Conwy, with its oak framing, magnificently bracketed out on a stone base. But although the buildings with a strong English accent, like Cochwillan, near Llanllechid, in the fifteenth century, Plas Mawr at Aber Conwy, the later part

The late Fifteenth or early Sixteenth Century

of Gwydir at Llanrwst, Pen y Bryn at Aber Gwynegryn, the old house at Vaynol, Plas yn Bont at Bont Newydd, and Bwlch y Maen, Penmachno, in the sixteenth and seventeenth and numerous examples of the eighteenth century, are infinitely finer architecturally than the local work, still they are mostly too large to be considered as cottages, and represent a type not so indigenous to the soil and not so useful for the purposes of our inquiry as the study of the native dwellings.

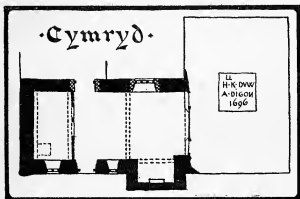
We will therefore pass at once to the next local example, **Cymryd, near Aber Conwy**, which, by the kindness of Mr. J. Glynne Jones and the Rev. Gwynedd Roberts, we were able to thoroughly examine and measure. The house consists of three portions built at different periods, but it is the earliest part, dating from **the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century**, with which we have to deal.

It consists of a hall originally about 18 feet in length up to the ingle, and 12 feet 6 inches in width; and a **chamber** about 7 feet by 12 feet 6 inches. The very small size of the latter seems to point to the fact of the comparatively recent introduction of a second room at that date. The ingle was removed when the house was enlarged in 1696, the present side wall being then added.

Both hall and chamber were originally open to

Cymryd, near Aber Conwy

the roof, but, very soon after the house was built, a loft was added above the chamber only, approached from the latter by a ladder and trap-door in the floor, the hall remaining open to the roof. At a later period the hall was half covered by a loft, and when the extension was added to the old house the loft was taken completely across, as we now see it.

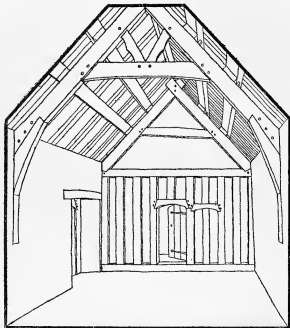


On the right is a later portion, in the centre of which
is shown the date stone.

The partition which divides the chamber from the hall is the original one, and is very interesting. It consists of a cill-piece now almost buried in the floor, from which spring pieces of oak 7 inches by 4 inches in size and about 8 inches apart, with a panel board, about an inch thick, slipped in between them. We find the same sort of construction

The earliest Bedchamber

in some of the mediæval work in Kent and other parts of the country. There are two doors in this screen, one of which was blocked up at an early date,



Cymryd, near Aber Conwy.

In this case only the partition is shown to the scale of 8 feet to an inch.

but, as the chamber does not appear to have been divided in any way, it is difficult to say what purpose they both served. Above the lower tie-beam of the principal, into which the partition is framed, the

Partitions and Wattlework

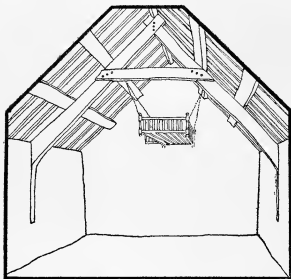
filling was formed of wattle interwoven round vertical pieces, about one and a half inches square, wedged into holes along the sides of the principal and the under side of the upper tie, by being driven along grooves on the upper side of the two ties. The whole was then plastered with clay. This filling has now been removed, but one of the vertical pieces remains in position. This seems to have been the usual method of making plaster partitions in this district. We find it at Cochwillan between the upper standards of the partition, and at Plas Mawr, Aber Conwy.

The roof over the hall has an interesting principal, shown in our sketch, such as might be found in one of the local churches—for these latter had now abandoned close-couple roofing and were roofed with principals and purlins—except that near the foot of the principal on each side a wall-piece is tongued in, which continues down behind the modern plaster to within a few feet from the floor. The same feature can be seen in the principal by the ingle at Bryn Tudur, Henryd.

There are some other roofs with this peculiarity in the district. A very curious example of somewhat similar character is to be seen in an old building, used at one time as a smithy, just behind Dinas Emrys in the Gwynant vale, called *Bendy 'r Efail*. In this case, however, the wall-piece and the rafter are one, being cut out of a single tree. The timbers

Bendy 'r Efail

are very rough and the walls are 3 feet 3 inches thick. This construction seems to indicate early work, but it is difficult to assign it to any particular



Bendy 'r Efail, near Beddgelert.

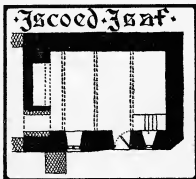
Suspended from the roof is shown a hanging crate with side door, called in Welsh 'clwyd fara,' or 'car eig.'

period. The trees out of which the rafters were formed must have been of a curious shape.

We cannot leave this period without mentioning the historical house of Cochwillan, near Llanllechid, and the fine roofs over the old part of Gwydir and the withdrawing-room at Plas Mawr, Conwy. These

English Influence

instances have little connection with the local work, but, like the old corner house at Aber Conwy, are interesting to compare with it. The great hammer-beam roof and the screens at Cochwillan, richly carved and moulded, are splendid examples of work done under English influence. The complete plan comprised two low wings in front, now no longer existing. At Gwydir, in the early part built by Meredyth



ap Ieuan, we find the curious feature of moulded beams against the wall carrying the weight of the principal cross-beam of the first floor to the ground-floor, which reminds us of the great principals coming to the floor in the early local buildings. The roof over this part is a very fine example of the type seen in some of the local churches, all the openings in the principals being cut in cusped forms. The roof over the withdrawing-room at Plas Mawr is

The Sixteenth and early Seventeenth Centuries

of the same type and apparently came from an earlier building, as it does not fit properly and is quite different from all the other roofs in the house.

The usual type of roof in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in the local work was, however, more like the earlier type with the huge curved principals coming to the ground, except that they generally stopped short of the floor by about 4 feet to 6 feet and had only one slightly curved tie.

Good examples of this type can be seen at **Ty'n Twr, Bethesda**, an old house belonging to the



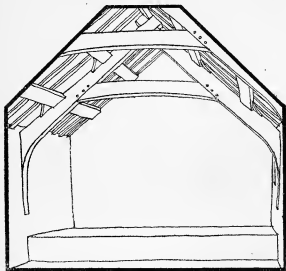
Iscoed Isaf, Nantlle.

Cochwillan family, at Buarthau, Dolwyddelan, and at **Iscoed Isaf**, at the very head of the Nantlle valley. The latter is a very interesting old house. As it is built on a slope, the chamber floor, which is at the highest part, is

raised some 18 inches above the floor of the hall. In later times a chamber has been added over the hall, approached by a straight stone staircase from the old chamber. The roof is a fine example with three principals—generally there are only two—placed close together, stiffened with wind-braces, and

Iscoed Isaf, Nantlle

starts from about 3 feet above the floor of the hall. The later chamber was originally lit by two windows in the gable, but when another building was placed against that end of the house the present dormer was added in front. Large portions of the old



Iscoed Isaf, above Nantlle.

This view shows the raised chamber, and a very fine roof of the period.

watting can be seen fixed to the rafters of the roof, and the stone slating is pegged to it. The chimney top has quite a sixteenth-century character, and a similar one can be seen to the left of the main road by the large quarry coming up from Nantlle.

The Seventeenth Century

In passing we must mention that no attempt has been made to collect every instance of each class of work in the district; neither time nor space would permit of this. There can be little doubt but that there are many others, and possibly much finer examples than those given, to be found by the diligent enthusiast.

We now pass on to the seventeenth century.



We will take as an example, from the earlier part of the period, an uninhabited cottage, called **Cae Uoi**, situated about three miles from Beddgelert, on the right-hand side of the Caernarfon road. It will be seen by the plan that it has been altered, the back having been converted into the front, and new windows and door opened, the old being blocked up. The old window and door in the hall are indicated by hatched filling. The old window in the chamber was that in the centre of the gable, that

Cae Uloi

towards the side being more recent. The present division between chamber and hall is comparatively modern. At a later date a loft had been placed over the former and a portion of the latter. The roof and ingles are, however, quite untouched and typical examples of the period.

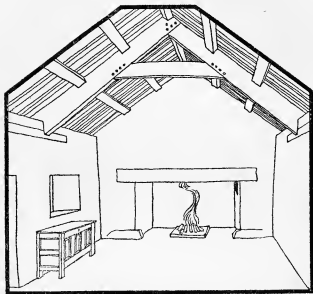
The two roof principals have no wall-pieces, but instead have two pieces of oak about 12 feet long, one on each side, running under the feet of the



Cae Uloi, near Beddgelert.

principals, and by connecting them together spread the thrust over the greater part of the side walls, instead of, as in the later roofs, having a small plate under each principal and so producing unequal thrust. In this respect the roof is nearer akin to the church roofs, where the rafters are almost invariably connected by a plate running the whole length of the building. It will be noticed that the purlins are let into the very solid principals—a form of construction

we do not find in later roofs, and making a more finished piece of work. On the south side of the roof some of the old wattling remains. The beam over the ingle is a very fine specimen, measuring 12 feet



Cae Uoi, near Beddgelert.

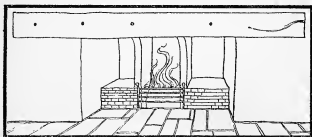
Against the left wall is shown the usual form of later chest.

by 1 foot 1 inch by 10 inches, but this is small compared with that at an old farm just above Beddgelert called **Dinas Moch**, which measures 18 feet long by 1 foot 6 inches by 1 foot. They apparently had far finer trees in this part of our district than along

Walling

the seacoast or even up the Conwy valley. This is the first roof we have had with straight rafters to the principals, the usual later form, giving up the last traces of the traditions of wattle walling, on which the great curved principals were founded.

It may not be inopportune at this point to enter briefly into the question of the different classes of stone which were used by the old cottage builders,



Dinas Moch, Beddgelert.

and the different varieties of walling which resulted from them.

They may be divided broadly into two classes: those built with **granite**, generally of boulder form, and those built with **slate rock**. The granite district comprises roughly the portion from Llanael-haiarn to the Orme's Head, along the seacoast, and up the Conwy valley as far as Trefriw; the slate-rock district is the upper part of the Conwy and the valleys of the Machno, Lledr and Llugwy, and the

The two Classes of Stone

district immediately around Snowdon, Llanberis, and Beddgelert.

The former rock is found in both round and flattish pieces, but is very difficult to cut or shape, so that even down to the middle of the eighteenth century we find as a rule but little attempt made to work it. The latter is a rock easily split and trimmed, not as heavy as the granite, and, without difficulty, procurable in pieces of very large size.

We must, of course, bear in mind that the old people very rarely quarried for stone. This was only done by the Latin monks and the English, or



Barn at Beddgelert.

for places built in the English style; but the local people collected for their simple purposes the material that lay about in the vicinity, and it is doubtless this, to a very considerable degree, which helps to give their buildings a strong local character.

Now Cae Lloi, the cottage we are now considering, is a good instance of slate-rock building, situated in the middle of the slate district. We note the great size of the stones, beginning very large at the base of the walls, where

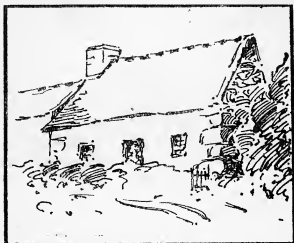
Slate Slabs

they could be more easily handled, and getting gradually smaller as the wall rises till, at the top, they are such as one man can easily lift. This is not only a practical arrangement, but gives great scale and dignity to the building. In some of the buildings the size of the stones at the base of the walls is enormous. This is more clearly seen in the outbuildings, which appear never to have been daubed with clay or whitewashed, but built dry from the beginning. It is quite usual to see the lower courses of a cow-house, about 25 to 30 feet long, composed of five to six stones averaging from 5 to 7 feet each in length. This, in contrast with the small slates of the roof, gives a wonderful effect of scale, almost Cyclopean. These walls very frequently batter or slope inwards, or the bottom courses stand forward a little, forming a plinth which, with the horizontal effect produced by the great length of the stones, increases the effect of stability.

At Cae Lloi is a good sturdy example of a cottage chimney. It is 4 feet 4 inches in width across the roof, by 3 feet 9 inches in breadth, and 5 feet high above the ridge. The weathering stones, which project from the chimney to carry off the water where the roof joins it, are fine slabs, standing out 8 or 9 inches. The top of the chimney is also finished with some large pieces.

We will compare this with a simple specimen of a

granite-built cottage, taking as our example, by the kind permission of Mr. James Porter, the **Old Derwen Deg**, above Berth Lwyd, near Conwy. This building belongs to the same century as Cae Lloi, but is a little later in character. We are now in a district in which the natural materials are far less

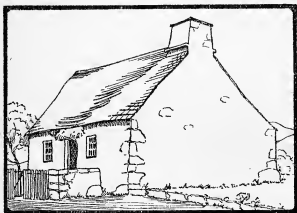


Cottage at **Ulaen Fawr**.

tractable. The stones, instead of being in flat slabs, are frequently found to be of round and inconvenient shapes. The timber too is smaller and often more knotty in character. We find very few huge beams over the ingles like those we have just seen. It was difficult to procure long stones, so, instead of the

Projecting Plinths

slabs we saw at Beddgelert over the windows and doors, we invariably find pieces of oak in the older granite-built cottages. The walling is of lumps of stone pegged up with smaller pieces, the flatter stones being all used at the angles. At the base, and particularly at the corners, we usually find some big boulders, as in the illustration of the cottage at



Cottage at Llandwrog.

Waen Fawr, just rolled into position to act as a foundation. There is a fine one also at Derwen Deg. This cottage has another peculiarity which we find more or less defined in many of the older examples, and also in the old churches at Bettws y Coed and Capel Curig, namely, a **projecting plinth** rising to the floor-level or a little above it. Sometimes we find

the whole wall built to a batter sloping inwards, and in the little examples from **Llandwrog**, the chimney also, giving a great impression of strength. One of the finest examples of boulder-built walling starting with very large stones at the base and diminishing to those of small size towards the top, is at **Carrog**, in **Cwm Penmachno**. The type of walling, formed of lumps of stone pegged round with small pieces, is characteristic of all the granite-built walling down to the middle of the nineteenth century in the local work. When finished, however, the smaller stones were as a rule all daubed over with clay, so that nothing could be seen but the round faces of the larger stones dotted over the wall like large plums in the schoolboy's 'spotted dog' pudding.

Pen y Groes, on the main road near **Llanwnda**, is one of the few old cottages still retaining its clay daubing, lime being used for whitewash only as in mediæval times.

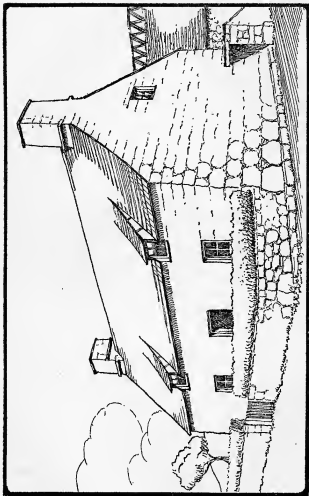
At a later date, in the early nineteenth century, when mortar came into use, and the stones were cut with hammers, the chippings were used for pegging the work, and, as it was considered a neat job, the use of whitewash was abandoned. An interesting example of this can be seen in the cartshed and loft at the **Old Plas, Llanfair Iffeban**.

There are some beautiful late examples of river stones used in this class of work more like large flint

Coursed Work

walling. This can be seen at Bont Newydd, near Caernarfon; but the finest example is in the farm buildings of **Benarth**, near **Aber Conwy**, where a local brindled red brick is used round the windows and doors with charming effect, the whole being in this instance left without whitewash.

In the district round Clynnog, from the eighteenth century onwards, we find coursed work, built in the same way of roundish stones, the joints pegged with stone chippings, but built in horizontal courses. The result is extremely effective, and the courses are not like those of modern work, all the same size, but diminish as the building rises from, say, 2 feet at the base to 9 inches at the top of the gables. This class of work is often slightly battered, so that it almost attains to the grand effect of the huge stone slabs which we saw around Beddgelert. In the earlier work we find the courses rather irregular, but as time went on the horizontal lines became more pronounced, and were carried round the building without a break, as at **Bryn Eithin**. Lastly, in the nineteenth century, the use of mortar having come in, and daubing the joints being no longer deemed essential, the pegs were omitted, and the work, in deference to the modern desire for machinelike finish, but with a great loss from a practical and artistic point of view, became plain squared coursed work, and was no longer whitewashed. At **Bont Newydd**



Bryn Eitbin, near Clynnog.

Cochwillan

all these systems can be seen ranging over two hundred years or so. The only instance of this type of walling in the northern part of our district is at **Cochwillan** in the late fifteenth century; otherwise it appears to be entirely confined to the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries round Clynnog.

It is interesting to observe how each district has its own particular type of masonry suited to its own material. We may note, too, in the finer examples,

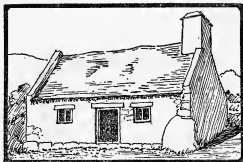


On the left is shown hatch between Chamber and Cowhouse.

what excellent work the old builders were able to produce from the bare materials, though they had only earth and clay to set them in, and were denied the use of cement, or even lime mortar.

We have made rather a lengthy digression on the subject of walling, but it is desirable that we should at an early stage appreciate the local differences of the district. We will now return to **Derwen Deg**, the example we were studying.

The plan is much the same as Cae Lloi, except that the chamber window is in the front, and not at the gable-end. It was in a ruinous state when first examined, not having been inhabited for sixty years, but it has since been restored. There were no remains of the screen between hall and chamber, though one had existed, and there had also been a loft over. The windows still retain their original window-frames,



Derwen Deg, Gwyn.

though the old leaded glazing they held has disappeared. They have each two lights, and each light measures only 1 foot 9 inches long by 1 foot wide, with the exception of that in the gable-end to light the loft, where each light was only 1 foot 3 inches by 9 inches. The door was 5 feet 4 inches high by about 3 feet, 2 inches wide, and the height of the ingie beam was 4 feet 6 inches from the earthen floor. In most of the earlier cottages the doors and ingie beams were

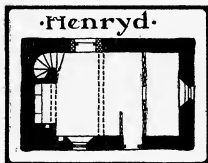
Chimneys

equally low. On the side of the ingle we find the usual recess, and in this instance there was one also at the back. What the use of these actually was is not known. The old chimney, though a fine example of its kind, is not so sturdy as that of Cae Lloi, being only 4 feet by 3 feet by 5 feet high.

Most of these older farms have high **chimneys**. We find them at the Old Plas, Llanfair Fechan, and there is said to have been a very high chimney at Merchlyn Bach, Ro Wen, probably built after this manner because the original roof covering was thatch. The period is noted moreover for its tall chimneys, and the fashion affected the local work as well as the more Anglicized buildings like Plas Mawr at Conwy. They are generally approximately square on plan, the wider side being across the roof. The later examples are much thinner, being, on plan, only a narrow oblong; these, however, do not appear till the later eighteenth century, and at first only for chamber fireplaces, the old square chimney being retained for the kitchen. Sometimes we find chimneys which do not rise out of the ridge set anglewise, doubtless to avoid a gutter as at **Ty'n Twr, Glan Ogwen**, and there is a fine double example at **Elernion, Trevor**.

The **Anglicized work** of this period is sometimes based on the local plan, as at Plas yn Bont, Bont Newydd, but generally is quite foreign in plan and

construction. It is characterized by stone, or sometimes wooden, mullions to the windows, in imitation of stone, as at Bwlch y Maen, Penmachno. These houses, though in no way local in character, were often built by local workmen, as is evident from the workmanship. Sometimes a later addition will be added in the local manner, as at Dugood, Penmachno. They are, taken as a whole, a very faint reflection



of the beautiful stone buildings of Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, and the Cotswolds, with their perfect proportions and fine workmanship.

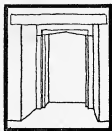
We will now proceed to another later type of cottage-plan, namely those which had from the beginning a loft over the hall as well as over the chamber, converting the former into the modern kitchen, a change unfortunate both on hygienic and artistic grounds, though admitting more sleeping accommodation. Of these we will take three

Stone Staircases—Henryd

examples, Henryd near Conwy, Bwlch Gyd-rhos, higher up than Derwen Deg towards Llangelynnin old church, and Hafod Lwyfog in Pant Gwynant, all probably dating from the seventeenth century.

They are all distinguished by the stone staircases which are placed, in the first two instances, at the side of the ingle, but, in the last example, at the opposite end, at the side of the parlour fireplace. We will start with Henryd, which is peculiar in the northern district in having the chamber window in the gable-end.

The loft upstairs is divided into two rooms by a modern partition, and the dormers are not original, the light having been previously obtained from a window in the side of the gable-end above the chamber. The same feature remains in a perfect state at Bwlch Gydrhos. What appears to have been the old door-frame is now fixed in a doorway leading from the kitchen to a later outbuilding at the back. It still retains the pointed form of the head. The base of the house is built with very large stones, uncut and projecting forwards, nearly as much so as in the extraordinary example at Llannerch y Felin, Ro

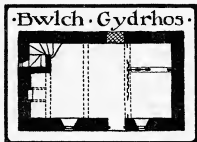


Henryd.
Old doorway.

Doorway opposite Front Door

Then, where the base is made of round boulders projecting in all directions.

Bwlch Gydrhos is another example of the same type, but with a square staircase, and the inglé put right on one side, the stairs working quite independently and not over the top of the inglé as at Henryd. We find also, for the first time in the cottages, the remains of a doorway opposite the front door. This was a common arrangement in England in the

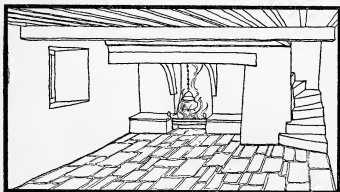


Middle Ages, and we find it at Cochwillan and Plas Mawr.

The windows of both kitchen and chamber at Bwlch Gydrhos face to the front, and were very small, that in the kitchen measuring only 1 foot 10 inches by 2 feet 5 inches in the clear of the stonework. The old frames have disappeared. Across the middle of the chamber is a portion of an older partition than that existing between the chamber and kitchen, dating apparently from the

Bwlch Gydrhos

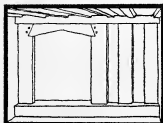
sixteenth century, and in style and character like the old door-frame we saw at Henryd. It is formed of solid uprights 10 inches by 2½ inches, and panel boards between, quite plain and without mouldings, as at Cymryd, but not as thick. At one end is a pointed doorway. The whole is built on a large 8 inch square cill-piece, and the head is



Bwlch Gydrhos, Llangelynin.

notched to take joists. It does not in any way fit this building, however, in its present state, as the height of the present joists from the floor is 6 feet 5 inches, but in the old partition they were only 6 feet 1 inch. It is possible that the ground-floor level may have been lowered a little to increase the height, and a new partition placed across the building, or that this old piece may have come from another building.

The development of these **partitions** is interesting; the earliest appear to have been like that at Cymryd; later they were formed of less heavy timbering, as in the example before us. Then the main uprights were sometimes moulded, as we shall see at Hafod Lwyfog, and, lastly, the system of post-and-panel was superseded by in-and-out boarding, as in the later partition at Bwlch Gydrhos, sometimes



Bwlch Gydrhos, Llangelgynin.
Old Partition.

plain as in this instance, at other times moulded as at Tyddyn Pwll, Ro Wen, and Pen y Bryn, Aber.

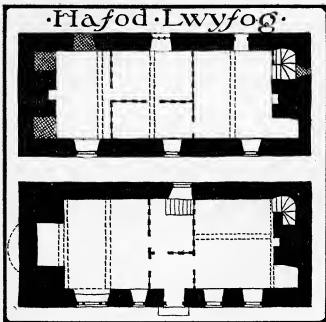
The loft at Bwlch Gydrhos is lit by a little window on the stairs, and the window we have before referred to in the

side of the opposite gable. There is no sign of any partition having existed.

The roof is of a very steep pitch, the rafters meeting together at an angle of about 80° , resembling those we find in the stone-built houses of the Midlands: a very pleasant pitch and practical for thatch and small slates, but possibly not so sturdy-looking as the more usual pitch of 88° to 92° . The two principals, each consisting of two rafters and a tie, are good examples of this simple type, the rafters

ŷafod Lwyfog

diminishing in size from feet to ridge. The feet are, to a certain extent, tied together by the beams of the floor, placed across directly underneath them, though they do not appear to be in any way connected.



The Chamber-plan is shown above, the Ground-plan below.

We will now take the last example of this type, namely ŷafod Lwyfog. This house is the largest and most important example of local work we shall come across. Its date is cut on the beam over the

parlour, E LL 1638. The plan is far more elaborate

E

than any we have yet seen, but still quite local in character. It consists of an entrance, with kitchen on one side, a chamber or parlour on the other, and a buttery between communicating with the kitchen and a cellar below the parlour.

There are at present two wooden staircases, but the original stone stairs went up, as we have seen, from alongside the parlour fireplace. The house consists of four stories: basement or cellar, ground-floor, chamber-floor, and loft.

The main beams of the floors are moulded, and even the joists have a double bead running along them. The partitions are post-and-panel, the posts being moulded. The parlour had a fireplace from the beginning, but whether there were any in the chambers is not certain, though the chimney-breasts are said to be ornamented under the modern papers with plaster-work, similar to that in the parlour, representing armorial bearings. There is at present no staircase to the loft, and there is no sign of how it was approached as the stone staircase goes no higher than the first floor. There was a window in the gable-end over the staircase, and also one in the other gable lighting the loft, a similar arrangement to that we have just referred to at Bwlch Gydrhos. The only old window is that looking on to the

Reed=Thatching

modern landing at the back. This is of three lights with wooden mullions of splayed form similar to the windows still to be seen at the back of Plas Mawr, Conwy.

The pitch of the roof here is very low, the rafters meeting together at about an angle of 100° , the lowest pitch we have yet come across.

This change is probably owing to the fact that stone slates, which do not require such a high pitch as thatch, began to come into use about this period. Before passing on to our next examples it may be well to consider briefly the methods of roof = covering employed in the old cottages. The earliest system was un-



Bafed Lwyfog, Pant Gwynant.

doubtedly reed=thatching tied with withes to wattling woven in and out of the rafters, in the way we saw at Cae Lloi, or in the better examples pegged to them, as at Iscoed Isaf.

Reed-thatching is different in many respects from straw-thatching, and much more durable but less warm. It is put on much thinner, for whereas straw ought to be about 15 inches thick, reed-thatching is

only about 6 inches, and is considered more water-tight thin than thick. It was fixed in just the same order as slates, that is, two alongside and one over the joint, as the stacks in the mountain districts are thatched now. The pitch of roof should be not less than 90° or it would be liable to leak.

The next step, the use of **stone slates**, was a great improvement as far as permanency both from decay and wind was concerned. These can still be seen on portions of many old roofs, but at **Llannerch y Felin, Ro Wen**, the whole of the back of the roof is covered with them. They are $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick, and measure about 5 inches by 10 inches on an average. They have, near the head of the slate, one peg-hole in the middle by which they were hooked on to the wattling. These roofs must, however, have been terribly draughty, for there does not appear to have been any method of rendering them behind as there was later, and the only system was for the moss-man to come round and stuff sphagnum moss, with an iron rod flattened at the end, up under the slates to keep out the wind and snow. It is possible, however, that the wattling was originally daubed with clay, though there is no sign of it on the remaining examples.

The enormous difference in weight between the thatch and these stones has doubtless accounted for the spreading of so many of the older roofs, which were not built to bear the weight. The new material

Cerrig Mwsog

further enabled old farmsteads to have their side walls raised, and a flatter pitched roof put on, thus securing chambers over the whole house, a very common arrangement, which it is very necessary to bear in mind if we would understand the life-history of many of the older farmhouses.

Gradually the better quality of rock was discovered which might be safely split about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick, and the type of slate known at the present time as '**Cerrig Mwsog**,' moss stone (English 'peggies'), so called from the moss-man mentioned above, came into regular use, and is the usual delightful covering we now see on old buildings. At a somewhat later date, about the beginning of the nineteenth century, **ton slates** (so called because they are sold by weight) first made their appearance. They are similar in character to the '**Cerrig Mwsog**,' but whereas the latter are generally not larger than 5 inches by 10 inches to 7 inches by 12 inches, the former are often enormous, 1 foot 6 inches by 2 feet not being at all uncommon. A very good instance of these is the slating of roof of the old part of the **George Hotel, Bangor**, the hostelry from whence, before the bridge was built, the ferry used to cross the Menai Straits. The same character, however, applies to both these types of slates, namely, that they come from the quarry in random sizes, and that they are thick and strong. When they come to the building they are sorted into

Slates of fixed sizes

stacks of similar lengths, but the widths vary, as in Westmorland slates, and it is this varying quality, combined with their thickness and solidity, which forms the charm of the roofs of the old cottages.

After a while it was found to be a saving of time to the slater, though more expensive in initial cost, to get the slates all cut to **fixed sizes** in the quarry. And though at first they retained their small and thick qualities, these were soon replaced by the thin and weak first quality slates, which, though very skilfully split, have done more to ruin the beauty of England and Wales, than even corrugated iron or terra-cotta! As, however, we shall touch on this subject later, we will now pass on to our last, and in many ways most important, examples, namely those cottages with dormers.

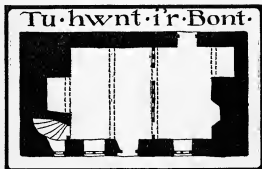
Of these there are three varieties; the earliest was the cottage with the **gabled dormer**, and of this, the finest type of native work, we will take three principal examples, the Old Vicarage at Clynnog, Tu hwnt i'r Bont by the side of the old bridge at Llanrwst; and Tyddyn Pwll, near Ty'n y Groes; the next, that with the **sloping roofed dormer**, of which there are many examples, a fine one being Bryn Eithin, near Llandwrog, and lastly, that with the **bipped dormer**.

Let us start with the **gabled dormer**. Although we found at Cymryd a gabled dormer in the early

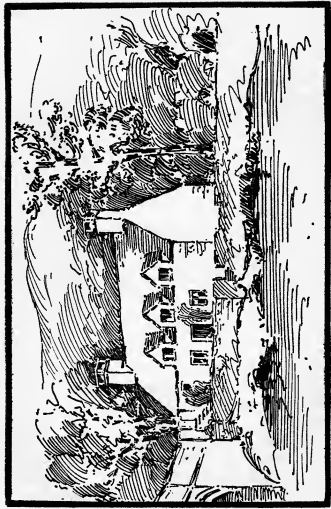
The Gabled Dormer

loft over the chamber, which probably dated from the sixteenth century, still we do not, as a rule, find dormer windows till the end of the seventeenth, or the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Our earliest example, **Tu hwnt i'r Bont**, at Llanrwst, by the old bridge, has, as is usual in this type, the loft divided into three chambers by post-and-panel partitions framed to the principals, the



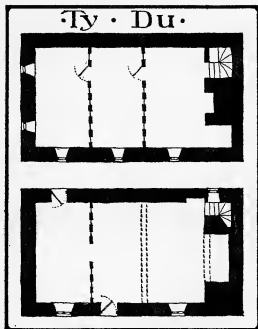
doorways connecting the chambers having flat pointed heads as at Cymryd and Bwlch Gydrhos. The extra number of chambers led to the introduction of dormers or windows in the roof, as it was impossible to light the central chamber from the end gables. In the earlier examples the builders boldly placed three gables in front with windows to light the three chambers. By this arrangement, the windows could be placed centrally in the rooms, and



Tu bwnt i'r Bont, Llanrwst.

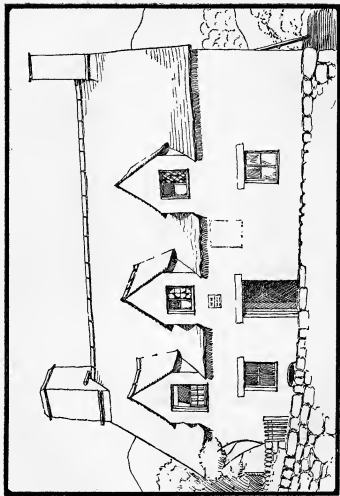
Ty Du, Llanberis

they could be of larger size than when, in the previous period, they were constructed in the end gables, and their size and position was controlled by the smoke flue.



Chamber-plan above, Ground-plan below.

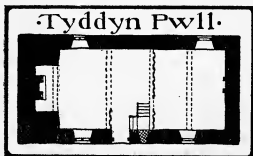
The stone staircase, however, still remains at the gable-end, making two of the chambers passage-rooms. There is a fine old house near Llanberis, on the old road to Caernarfon called Ty Du, which is



Tyddyn Dwl, near Ty'n y Groes.

Tyddyn Pwll, Ty'n y Groes

very similar to Tu hwnt i'r Bont. At the present time it has a wooden staircase starting from near the ingle, but the old stone stairs still remain in the corner, though walled up. It has the same type of partition dividing the chambers, but the windows on the chamber-floor, instead of being placed in gables, are in very small sloping dormers. The exterior of the house is too much covered with ivy to make a

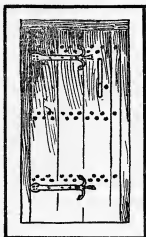


useful sketch, but it will be seen from the plan that the house has been laid out on broad and fine lines.

Tyddyn Pwll, Ty'n y Groes, our next example, has a pious inscription over the door in Welsh, meaning 'The peace of God be to this house, 1703.' This date is very useful in deciding the age of houses of this class, which otherwise we might be tempted to place earlier, if we take as our standard the old work in other parts of the country. As it is, they are perfectly native in character, and quite untouched by

any Renaissance feeling. The Renaissance, with its foreign pride and pedantry, never took much hold of this part of Wales.

The plan of the dormered cottage is chiefly distinguished from that immediately preceding it by



Door to Left at Tyddyn Pwll.

Probably old front door.

The *fleur de lis* hinges show the remnants of the Gothic tradition continuing down to the eighteenth century.

generally having a wooden staircase in the centre of the house, instead of that of stone at one end. This change is owing to the fact that the loft having now developed into three chambers, it was more convenient and private for the stairs to land in the centre room, instead of at one end, making only one passage-room instead of two.

In the old Vicarage at Clynnog the windows have all been replaced by others of larger size in the early nineteenth century, but at Tyddyn Pwll, a much finer example, in fact possibly the finest, as far as style and proportion is concerned, in our district, two out of three old dormers have their original windows, and one

Plas y Person, Clynmog

retains its original glazing. Whether these houses were originally roofed with stone slates, or with thatch, is uncertain. At the main gable-ends we find a thin piece of the wall rising above the slates, as in the earlier buildings like Derwen Deg, where it was doubtless put as a protection to the thatch. This feature, however, does not appear on the



Plas y Person (Old Parsonage), Clynmog.

The windows are not original.

dormers, so it may simply have been a survival, though doubtless, in high gales, it was a protection to the verges of the main gables.

The valleys at the intersection of the dormer with the main roofs are very simply but effectively worked with the slates only, without the use of lead. This method continued till the introduction of large and thin slates rendered it no longer pos-

sible. Modern roofs, instead of having the suavity and variety like that of the scales on a fish's back possessed by the old roofs, look as if they were made of thin iron plates, and are broken and cut up with the hard straight lines and unpleasant colour of the lead valleys. The usual method of laying valleys in the old days, was to carry alternate courses of slating one slate further on than is visible when the work is completed. This kind of work can only be



done in small slates, and the pitch of the two intersecting roofs must be about the same. At a later date, when fixed sizes of slates began to be used, and cutting them on the spot went out of fashion, it was usual to lay courses of two and three alternately down the valley, cutting the slates on either side, as we now do to a lead valley, but, although this avoided the use of lead, it introduced the hard line we usually see.

Twthill, Caernarfon

Another system was to lay a course of slates pointed at their tails, with a corner taken off their heads to enable them to be laid flat right down the gutter, and then to bring the slates from either side close together over them, the principle being that the point at the tail of the slate prevented the water from spreading over the whole surface of



House on Twthill, Caernarfon.

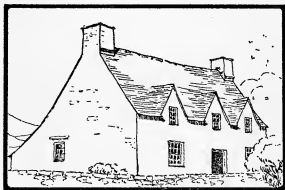
The right-hand door is modern.

the slate below, the point of each slate gathering it together as it travelled down from one to the other. Neither of these two latter systems, however, is very satisfactory, as the slates used were large and thin, and liable to crack in their length, causing thereby a leak. The old system of working in first one course and then another seems to be

The Sloping and Hipped Dormers

far the best, both from a practical and an artistic standpoint.

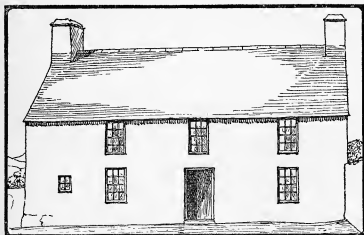
Instances of two-gabled houses are to be found, as that on **Twthill, Caernarfon**, which has now been converted into two houses. A curious instance of an old barn having been converted into a house in the eighteenth century is to be seen at **Ysgubor Fawr, near Dolbenmaen**.



Ysgubor Fawr, Dolbenmaen.

The sloping and hipped dormers are very common, and appear to need no special comment. The illustrations of **Bryn Eithin** near **Clynnog**, **Pen y Groes** at **Llanwnda**, and **Bryn Goleu, Llanfair Fechan**, show the former, and at **Beaumaris**, just outside our district, good instances can be seen of all types. The parts of **Beaumaris** away from the sea-front are full of excellent examples of local work.

Of the later cottage of the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, we need hardly treat. They are still very common, and their flatter roofs and symmetrical fronts are not very inspiring. Some of the larger and earlier examples have a fine broad character like **Plas Dolbenmaen**.



Plas Dolbenmaen.

To be more weather tight the slating is carried some way up sides of chimney.

Some of the older farms are most extraordinary collections of buildings of various dates. In the centre will be the old house and at each end later additions, sometimes making a long line of buildings as at **Bryn Goleu, Llanfair Ffechan**.

But to return to Tyddyn Pwll, we observed that

The Windows and Glass

two of the old windows in the dormers remained, one of them having its original glass. It partakes of the same type as all the early glass we find in this locality, and is of a green and horny character. The earliest glass we find in the local churches goes back to the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. It is stained, and is thought to have been brought from Chester. The glass at Tyddyn Pwll is of such a very



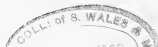
Bryn Goleu, Llanfair Ffechan.

much rougher and more discoloured type that it is possible it may be the product of some local furnace. It is curious that the earlier glass we come across does not appear to have been in diamond lights but rectangular, though at a later date we almost invariably find a revival of the old Gothic diamond form. When the windows were made to open, they had iron casements of the simplest section, but in the majority of cases, the ventilation was obtained through the door only, all the windows being fixed lights.

The Ridge

During the eighteenth century the sliding window was introduced, and is sometimes found with leaded lights, but more often with wooden sash-bars. These continued side by side with the sash-window, which latter, with its almost square panes, did not become common till the beginning of the nineteenth century. Wooden casements are not often found, as they were probably not considered very serviceable in this windy country, and, further, the joiner could make the sliding windows without the necessity of employing any ironwork. The ridge of the roof at Tyddyn Pwll is of stone-grey sandstone, possibly from Talacre, or somewhere in that district, cut in varying lengths, from 2 feet to 3 feet. This, of course, is a type of ridge which was only used on the better class of building; the usual ridge was at first probably made of clay, but at a later date of lime-and-hair mortar, and neatly whitewashed. Ridges of this type may still be seen all over the country.

During the first half of the last century, when the use of brick, particularly the beautiful brindled Buckley fire-brick, became common, ridges were introduced of this material in the natural varied colours—from orange through red to deep purple—in which they came out of the kiln. The length of the tiles is about 18 inches, and in many ways it may be said to be an improvement, both practically and artistically, on the old sandstone ridging, though that may have



looked better with the very thick stone slates. Some of the early brick chimneys, when built solid and square like that at **Tan Lôn, near Maes y Groes**, though not to be compared to the great whitewashed stone stacks, are none the less good of their type. They are in harmony with the general colour of the district, and form a nice contrast to the grey-green or violet-blue of the slates.

They had a curious fancy in the Caernarfon district of colouring the ridge tiles white and black, or white and red alternately, and this method of colouring may still be seen on the old cottages scattered over that part, as in the example shown from Waen Fawr.

Most of the farmsteads of the same character as Tyddyn Pwll and the old Vicarage at Clynnog have a little window to light the stairs. This window has been blocked up in the former, but the outline is still visible in the wall. The old stairs, however, are quite intact. They are rather primitive in construction and steep, and no winders are attempted at the turn. The stairs at Clynnog have been replaced by later ones, but appear originally to have been of the same character, though starting from a different part of the kitchen. A great curved piece is cut out of the beam over the bottom steps to admit of head-room. Evidently wooden stairs were rather a tough job for the local joiners.

The Interior

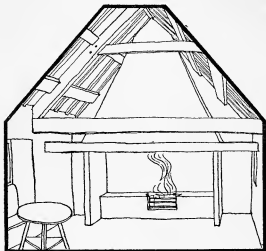
The interior of these old houses is entirely dependent for its effect upon the simplest means: that of just showing the construction, instead of concealing it, as in most modern work.

Surely the beams and joists are a much better ceiling than the dull waste of whitewashed plaster, the in-and-out boarded partitions than flat papered walls, the deep ingle than the cast-iron grate, and the oak dresser, tridarn, settle, and table than the host of badly constructed effects, hideous with machine-made ornament, which do not furnish, but rather destroy all feeling of harmony and comfort, and must be continually renewed to be presentable.

The **ingle**, the centre as it were of the house, must receive a little consideration. The earliest arrangement was to make the fire directly on the hearth, without any iron fire-bars or hob; later, when we come to the eighteenth century, two hobs were built and fire-bars fixed between. The master of the household sat on the right-hand of the fire, and on the hob at his side was placed the milk to be ready for churning, while on the other was a stock of peat fuel. At this period the greater portion of the chimney was closed in above—to prevent the soot falling on those below—by slate slabs supported on two or four oak struts, or sometimes stones arching over from the fireplace to the ingle beam. The effect of these is almost mediæval in character, as

The hearth

shown in the illustrations of Ffynnon Bedr, taken from a sketch kindly sent by Miss Brazil, and in those of Clynog Vicarage, and Dinas Moch, Beddgelert, with its magnificent ingle beam referred to above. At Tyddyn Pwll the arrangement is not



Ty'n Cae, Bettws y Coed.

On each side of the ingle are large slate slabs standing on end.

On the left is shown the local form of circular table
or 'bord gryn.'

quite normal: there are here no struts, and two early ovens, with Adams's ornament, are introduced, one at each side. In almost all these instances brickwork is employed, showing their late date, and the brickwork and struts are, or have been, tarred.

A Wattle Ingle

Just above the back of the fire generally a hole was formed and a draught flue connected with the space under the bars. In the later examples a pit was formed for baking the bread under the fire.

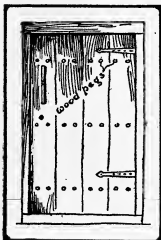
At Ty'n Cae, near the Fairy Glen at Bettws y Coed, there is a curious inglen built in wattle-work daubed with clay, and a huge hood placed over the fire, resting on a cross-beam. The cottage is now



all one room, but probably had a small chamber where the beam crosses in the usual position at the opposite end to the inglen. The door has a curious wooden latch, and is pegged together entirely without nails. There is another instance of a wattle-hood similar to that at Ty'n Cae just outside our district at Maes Merddyn, near Nebo.

Leaving the inglen we now come to the body of the kitchen. The floor was formed of **beaten earth or clay**, sometimes whitewashed all over, but usually round the edges only, as at Tyddyn Cynal, or else

almost polished with rubbing; many of these remain still in use. Slate floors did not come into general use till quite a recent date. In front of the window we find as a rule an oblong table at which the farm-



Door to Ty'n Cae.

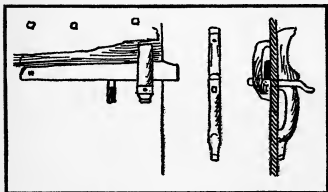
Pegged together with wood pegs, and with wooden latch.

hands and the sons and daughters of the family sat, the head-man, or farmer's foreman, taking the head of the table, even above the farmer's own sons. On the other side of the kitchen was a three-legged round table, at which sat the farmer, his wife, and youngest child. This was the common arrangement during the earlier part of the nineteenth century, and is kept up in the outlying

districts even now. Projecting out from the side of the ingle and facing the window is the settle. The dresser, or 'tridarn,' and the tall clock are placed against the back wall and the partition between kitchen and chamber. This completes the furniture of the room. There is nothing we see which is not useful and at the same time ornamental—that is,

The Furniture

they all add to the homeliness and cheerfulness of the room. The bright blue paper at the back of the dresser on which is placed the blue and white china, superseding the earlier wooden platters, or even some highly prized pewter plate; the shining copper pots and kettles, and brass clock-face; the dark-brown, highly polished oak furniture, all good and



Wooden Latch to Cottage Door, Ty'n Cae.

serviceable; the low and comfortable ceiling, and the latticed-window,—all combine to give an effect of snugness and comfort which it would be difficult to find in a modern room even with all the insanitary curtains and carpets we find necessary.

The life in the old cottages was, within the memory of living men, practically unchanged from what it had been for hundreds of years. Mr. David

Practical Conclusions

Griffith of Llanfair Fechan has very kindly given us an idea of the daily fare as follows:—Breakfast at 7 to 8, barley bread and butter-milk, or oatcakes, butter, cheese and milk. Dinner at 12, 'tatws llaeth,' or potatoes in milk, and salted beef or bacon, fried or boiled, or mutton. Tea, without tea, at 4 to 4.30; in summer, 'maidd' or junket; in winter, 'siot,' ground-up oatcake and hot butter-milk. Supper at 7 to 8, 'uwd,' porridge and milk. The long winter evenings were spent in the feeble illumination of the rushlight, by the women in weaving, by the men making farm instruments, singing, or reading aloud. Space does not permit us to go into the very interesting details of the life of the various periods with which we are concerned, but what we have seen will help us in some small measure to picture the family life in the old days.

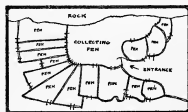
Having now considered the historical development of the cottage, we will in conclusion consider briefly what **practical conclusions** we can draw therefrom.

We have already seen how well suited the old methods of building are to the country. Surrounded by exquisite beauty, why should we live in ugliness? It is still more important that we should not break into the beautiful harmony of the landscape with something quite out of tune with the district.

It is not the age of the old Welsh cottage that

Rough-rendering and Whitewash

makes it an integral part of Welsh scenery, for the slate and stone weather but very little, but the fact that the very materials which compose that scenery are used with nature's finger-marks still on them, not obliterated by a precision of workmanship both useless and expensive. The walls of our cottages never look so well as when they have just been re-whitewashed, showing all the delicate undulating contours of the stones of which the wall is composed, and



PLAN OF SHEEP PEN, UNDER THE HEAD OF
Carrig Fawr, Llanfair Ffechan.

causing the little windows to sparkle with reflected light. This rough-rendering of the joints and subsequent whitewashing is certainly more practical and water-tight than any pointing. When the situation is very exposed, or when we are condemned to use brick, we cannot do better than cover the walls with rough-cast, as we find in many of the later cottages after the use of lime had become general, and, as long as we have good solid proportions and a beautiful roof, our work will not be out

of harmony. What we miss more than anything in the brick-built cottage are the deep internal splays to the windows which we get in a stone-built wall. Even when the surface of the wall is hidden by rough-cast, it is often possible to have a plinth below the level of the damp course of large boulders or slabs projecting somewhat from the wall and forming a fine base to the house and something akin to nature.

Before leaving the question of stonework, we must refer to the method of **dry walling**, at one time quite a skilled trade, but now unfortunately hardly understood by the younger masons. This is undoubtedly the finest way of using the local materials, whether of the boulder or the slab character.

In this hilly country, where a terrace garden, in itself a very beautiful form of garden, is almost a necessity, nothing can be finer than terrace walls constructed in this manner. The effect of these walls, forming as it were a great spreading base to a whitewashed house, is excellent, producing a most happy colour arrangement and showing the beauty of the local stone to perfection.

There is one more point concerning whitewashed walls which the old cottages teach us, and that is that the white building should not be too prominently in evidence, particularly in strong summer sunshine, otherwise it will be too much of a dot on the land-

Local Trees

scape. Practical considerations, however, caused the old builders to place their dwellings in sheltered and therefore not too prominent spots, and to surround their houses, at any rate on the windy side, with a good collection of oaks or sycamores. Thus, in the summer, the white was broken up with the green foliage, and in winter the browns and blue greys of the branches form a cool setting for the white walls.

Many old farms have now lost their trees, and we can at once see what a loss it is both from a practical and an artistic standpoint.

How beautiful these **local trees** are and how perfectly suited to the country! They have even developed a special growth, doubtless due partly to the poor soil, but even more to the violent gales they so well withstand. Not so many of the pines that have been introduced into the country in recent years, such as the spruce-fir and Austrian pine, which, though doubtless very suitable in their own land, are entirely out of harmony here, both in colour and character.

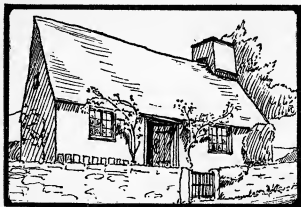
The Scotch fir and the cedar, though not absolutely native, look, if used moderately, quite at home in this part, but happy is the man who has round him the Welsh oak, sycamore, mountain-ash, beech, holly, and yew, the real native trees of the country, which have acclimatized themselves for hundreds of years in this district.

In the planting of gardens we have a great deal to learn from the Japanese, who have a most wonderful collection of native trees, and, as Japan is a country whose physical features are not unlike those of our district, many of their beautiful flowering trees seem to be quite at home here, and open, to the planters of trees and shrubs, a wonderful vista of possibilities, which will in time, we trust, make the whole laurel tribe a thing of the past.

To return to our Cottage, **the roof** is, after all, possibly the most important feature; nothing can atone for a roof of hard thin slates of even texture and colour. We have already touched on the various varieties of forms of slates, the 'Moss' slate, the 'Ton' slate, and the thick small fixed-sized slate, all these form a good, practical, and strong roof, and at the same time a pleasing one and in harmony with the country. Best of all is the Moss slate, particularly when there is plenty of variety of size, so that the large slates can be put at the eaves, and they can be arranged in diminishing sizes with the smallest at the ridge. There is great variety of colour in the local slates, and there are also fine quarry and watersplit stains to be had. Broken colour is what is wanted on the roof; in fact, no trouble can be too great to make this all-important feature really beautiful, and there is plenty of good local material to do it with.

Modern Methods

Of course the old cottages were sadly deficient in light, and, as far as the chambers were concerned, air also, a state of things which, though it might not be so important with the out-of-door life then lived, must be carefully avoided at the present day. Further, in the old days they had only clay to



Tal y Cafn Bach.

A good example of the smaller cottage with high pitched roof, probably for thatch. The chamber window is a sliding one, the kitchen fixed, ventilation being obtained through the door.

work with, whereas we have cement, the use of which enables us to keep our houses perfectly dry, a thing they were often not able to do, and of course the healthiness of our home should be the very first consideration, even before its beauty. On the other hand, we cannot hope for the same permanency for our work, as we are denied, as a general rule, the use

of oak, of which they made such excellent work. There is a great deal to be learnt from their failures as well as from the wonderful results they often obtained even with their very limited resources.

Lastly, we would draw the reader's attention to the **simplicity** of the old cottages. We are dealing not with the Hall or the Manor—possibly, for these something more of the English type would be preferable—but with the small Grange or the Cottage, on which no money is to be spent on anything which does not answer some useful purpose. This was the case with the old cottages, and therefore we find complete simplicity. They were planned to be absolutely suitable to the requirements of the time. We must do the same, using to the full the additional real advantages we now possess, but observing always the same simplicity.

Our building, besides being thoroughly practical, should have in it that element of **beauty and poetry** which gives it an individuality, and those relations of window to wall, of chimney to roof, of mass to contour, which give the smallest building the dignity and repose of fine proportion,—a beauty for which many of the old cottages are so conspicuous. Further than that we cannot go.

Nature, if we will only allow her, will provide us with ornament finer than the most delicate carving, more subtle than the most intricate pattern. Our

Simplicity

roofs will have something of her infinite variety of texture and colour; our walls, standing firm on their rock bases, something of the strength and majesty of her hills. The greatest artist can do no more. And so we see that **simplicity** is, after all, the greatest lesson taught us by the old cottages. In the words of William Morris—‘**Simplicity of life, begetting simplicity of taste, that is, a love for sweet and lofty things, is of all matters most necessary for the birth of the new and better art we crave for: simplicity everywhere, in the palace as well as in the cottage.**’



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